

POLITICS AND MORALS

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ken. The great Italian completely ignored the ultimate potency of moral forces. Had he been invited to forecast the future he would have predicted an essentially unchanging world. *Plus ga change, plus c'est la mime chose.* His interpretation of political society was static. The human animal, as portrayed by Machiavelli, is unable to climb above the level of his baser self, as water is incapable of rising above its source.

Even those who feel themselves unable to reject his gospel outright may draw a distinction, which never occurred to the thinkers of the sixteenth century, between domestic and foreign affairs. Within the frontiers of the most civilized states responsible government has replaced autocracy, and the rule of law has superseded the whim of the ruler. For the moment there is a set-back in this process, and half Europe is in the grip of dictatorships. But I firmly believe that the liberalizing forces which have given Western civilization its peculiar stamp in the last four centuries will reassert themselves when the supermen who have challenged their validity pass away. The most satisfactory criterion of civilization is not the growth of knowledge or the increase of amenities, but the degree in which social life is humanized, individuality fostered and political action brought within the moral sphere. In the more civilized communities the theoretical omnipotence of the executive is tempered by the fact that our rulers, like other citizens, are subject to the laws, can be sued in the courts, and can be changed by constitutional methods. With the aid of a vigilant public opinion and a free Press we have reached a stage when the government is expected not only to conform to the ordinary principles of honourable dealing but to set a shining example. In communities like our own, resting on a solid foundation of ordered liberty, the maxims of *The Prince* are no

longer appli-

cable as regards internal affairs.

" At the bottom of all the confused clamour
against him,"
writes Lord Morley in his memorable Romanes
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Machiavelli," the people knew what they meant
and their
instinct was not unsound. Mankind, and well
they know it,
are far too profoundly concerned in right and
wrong, in mercy
and cruelty, in justice and oppression, to favour a
teacher who,
even for a scientific purpose of his own, forgets
the awful
difference." • It is this general acceptance to-
day of the duty
of rulers to set a good example that accounts for
the world-wide
horror at the murder of the Tsar and his family
by the Bol-
shevists in 1918, and the massacre of June 30,
1934, when